

Artificial Intelligence by altoinkblots

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Summary: The year is 3503, and the world lives in quiet complacency. That is, until the project MKULTRA has its AI system destroyed, children are kidnapped, and two gangs run by kids have to save their hometown of Hawkins, Indiana. This is set in a futuristic AU, with almost no elements of the supernatural. This follows the main plots of seasons 1 and 2 of Stranger Things. Enjoy!

1. Prolouge

Prolouge

November 4, 3503

A night guard walked through empty white halls, lazily eyeing the white tiled floor. Lights flickered above him as he takes a long sip from a metal flask. He smacked his lips, his eye twitching. "Don't even know why I'm working this damn job," he mumbled. "Creepy as hell." The lights flicker again, but the guard takes no notice.

Far off in the distance, he heard faint screaming. He checks his watch. The digital face reads 21:43. *A little behind schedule, aren't we?* he thought to himself. No matter. He was a simple night guard, walking through the halls of the weirdest facility on the planet (why research AI units? They've been around for *centuries*) with creepy kids looking straight at him through one-way glass. Maybe that's why he drunk so much.

The screaming abruptly stopped, but the guard ignored it, choosing instead to drink some more from his hip flask. The lights started to flicker violently. The guard stood there with the cold metal pressed against his bottom lip, looking up at the fluorescent lights above him. The lab was completely silent, so why could he hear faint static all around him?

He put the flask away, un-hooking the shooter from his belt. The air smelled like static, and he had an uneasy feeling that he was being watched.

The lights kept getting brighter and brighter, and the blackness in between the flickers kept getting shorter and shorter.

"If you think this is funny, it's not!" he called out to the brightly lit hallway. Windows of the one-way glass stretched all the way down the hallway.

Funny.

The guard spun around, pointing his shooter into the distance. "Who are you? Show yourself!"

Show... Yourself...

The guard cursed. That damn static filled his ears. making it nigh impossible to hear anything.

I think..."Where are you!" he bellowed.

*I think...*The lights kept getting brighter and brighter by the second. The guard could have sworn he heard the pattering of little feet, but that was probably his imagination.

*I think that you should... you should...*The guard kept spinning around and around, pointing his shooter at everything. One of the cameras slowly moved to look straight at him. Soon all of the other cameras had done the same. All of a sudden, the static stopped.

*Run.*The guard dropped his shooter and ran towards the exit, the lights flickering more violently than before.

He never made it to the elevator.

2. Chapter One

Chapter One

November 4, 3503

"Something is coming. Something thirsty. Thirsty for blood."

Four boys huddled around a table, squinting in the low light. One of them partially hid behind a folder as he fingered a small figurine.

"If it's a demogorgon, I'm quitting the party," said a boy with curly brown hair.

"It's always the demogorgon, Dustin," said another boy who was kind of hard to see in the low light.

"Just because it's always the same, doesn't mean that I have to like it."

"You have more HP than I do!"

"Lucas, I really don't want to argue about HP right now."

Lucas groaned. "Let's just get on with the campaign, okay? Mike?"

Mike cleared his throat. "You hear it approaching, its footsteps echoing off of the tunnel walls." He took hold of the figurine he had been fiddling with and slammed it on the grid in front of him. "It's an army or orcs!" he shouted.

"Oh, we got this," Lucas giggled with glee.

Mike furrowed his brow. "But... that's not all you hear... It's the arziel!" He slammed another figurine onto the table, right behind the orcs.

"D'Arvit," swore Dustin. "This is worse than the demogorgon."

"Will, it's your turn to roll next," reminded Mike.

Will took the D20 dice into his hand, taking a deep breath.

"Cast protection," Dustin told Will firmly.

"No, fireball him!" cried Lucas.

"Cast. Protection!"

"Fireball!"

"I'd need a fifteen or higher for the fireball to even work!" Will said, starting to panic.

"Cast! Protection!"

"The arziel is tired of you foolish mortals!" Mike bellowed. He took his own D20 into his hand, ready to roll.

"Fireball!"

"Protection!"

Will closed his eyes and threw the twenty-sided dice onto the table. Everyone held their breath as it rolled to the edge of the table and onto the hardwood floor and rolled out of view.

"Find it!" yelled Lucas, dropping to his knees. The boys fell to the floor, searching blindly with their hands.

The lights suddenly came on, and Mrs. Wheeler stood in front of the boys, hands on her hips. Everyone froze.

"Hi, Mom," said Mike weakly.

"I came down here an hour ago telling you boys you had to be done by 20:05. Guess what time it is now?" she asked.

Mike shrugged. "20:30?" he asked weakly.

"21:24. It's time for you all to go home." Mrs. Wheeler started walking up the stairs.

Mike scrambled to his feet. "But Mom," he protested, "this campaign has taken us three weeks to plan! We've been playing for fourteen hours, come on, just fifteen more minutes?"

Mrs. Wheeler spun on her son. "You've been playing for fourteen hours?"

Mike gulped sheepishly. "Yes?"

Mrs. Wheeler sighed. "You can put this on hold for one week, Mike." She continued walking up the stairs. Mike ran up after her.

"Found it!" said Will.

"What is it?" asked Lucas expectantly.

Will looked down at the small face of the dice, his stomach sinking. "Eleven," he moaned.

"Did Mike see it?" asked Dustin.

Will shook his head.

"Then it doesn't count."

"I'm not sure that's how it works."

Dustin shrugged. "Just go with it, dude."

Will shrugged and gathered his stuff from the cluttered table.

"Hey, do any of you guys want this pizza?" asked Lucas.

Dustin and Will shook their heads.

"I'll ask if Nancy wants to finish it off."

"Nancy isn't here," said Dustin. "She left for her date with *Steve Harrington*." Dustin spat Steve's name like it was a curse, which it was.

The three boys left the basement and went to the garage where they had stashed their scooters. Only Dustin's had wheels, but only because it was cheaper to get wheels attached than to use the magnetic strips. Mike stormed out of the kitchen. "See you guys next week," he said grouchyly.

"Bye," said Lucas, taking his scooter and shooting away on the strips.

"See you ladies later," said Dustin, riding away.

Will stood next to Mike. Mike was younger than Will, even though he was taller, which irked Will to no end.

"It was an eleven," said Will

"Huh?"

"It got me. The arziel." He paused for a second. "See you tomorrow." He grabbed his scooter and rode it to the strips, not hearing Mike's response.

Dustin and Lucas were already too far gone for Will to ride home with them, so he sped above the strip alone in the dark. After a while, the strip sparked below him and one of the tiny dots of electricity knocked into Will's scooter, throwing the entire thing off balance. The scooter tumbled out of the strip's magnetic field and into the ditch on the side of the road.

The ID chip embedded in Will's left forearm exploded with pain. He cried out, crawling out from beneath the scooter. He heard the soft hum of an approaching vehicle. The hum was lower than normal, which meant the vehicle was going slowly. On Mirkwood, where the speed limit was fifty knots per hour? Unlikely.

The closer the vehicle got to Will, the more his ID chip hurt. A headache started to form in the back of his head. He cried out, clutching his head, slowly falling to his knees. Tears of pain threatened to come to his eyes. The vehicle stopped right at the spot where Will's scooter had been thrown off of the strips.

Something buzzed in the back of Will's mind.

Show yourself...

The door on the vehicle slid open effortlessly.

I think... I think... I think that you should...

Run.

Will scrambled to his feet, ignoring the pain in his head and arm. He heard someone swear behind him. "Dammit! Get the kid!"

Will kept running. He ran through the woods, barely feeling the bare twigs that he flew into, stretching up his face. Adrenaline pulsed through him like a second heart.. Before long, he saw the familiar form of his house, and he immediately relaxed. He ran up to the front door, panting so much that it was hard to breathe, and turned the doorknob. Locked.

"D'Arvit," he cursed, trying the doorknob over and over again. He briefly looked behind his shoulder. He didn't see anything, but that didn't help his anxiety levels. Will closed his eyes and tried to calm his racing heart. He grasped the doorknob firmly, and *pushed*.

He wasn't sure how he did it. He wasn't sure he could, after all these years. One second all he saw was the back of his eyelids, the next he saw the very mechanisms that made up the lock. It was an old-fashioned lock that used a key and everything. He saw the rods that were attached to springs with a horizontal line on each of them, and he saw how they could line up with each other to make the lock turn. He focused even harder, and one by one, he made the rods move. With a soft *click*, he opened his eyes. A small stream of blood sneaked out of his left nostril, but he ignored it, bursting into the empty house.

"Mom? Jonathan?" he called out. No answer. He slammed the door behind him, locking and barring it. He let out a breath of relief, his heartbeat slowing and the energy from his limbs fading. All of a sudden, all of the lights in the house flared brighter. Will spun towards the door, blinded. Static filled his ears. He couldn't hear or see a single thing.

The lights dimmed back into nothing. The open door swung slightly on its hinges, and Will Beyers was nowhere to be seen

* * *

For as long as she could remember, 011 has always been cold. The

labs were never warm, and her pale blue hospital gown only covered so much skin, but it was so thin anyways that it didn't matter. But this was the coldest she had ever been.

Sneaking out had been easy. After the system had been fried, everyone was rushing around. No one paid attention to a little girl running barefoot through the empty hallways. The flickering lights scared her, and she always froze when she heard voices. Luckily the system was damaged badly enough that she didn't need to present her arm to the scanners. It wouldn't work anyway. Where the little square was supposed to go all she had was her name branded onto her skin in bold, black characters. 011. That was all she would ever be.

The problems arose when she realized just how cold Outside was, and all she could do was keep running away away away from the Bad Place and the Bad Men.

Alarms started blaring, and 011 knew that they knew she was gone. They would come looking for her, and then she would be put into Time Out or forced to use her powers more and more until she would black out again. That was why she always did as Papa asked. No matter what.

She felt a current of air that smelled stale. She looked over and saw a tunnel in the ground. Dogs barked in the distance, and a spotlight started scanning over the dead grass. 011 looked back at the Bad Place, then back at the tunnel, then back at the Bad Place. She made a split-second decision and ducked into the tunnel seconds before the spotlight scanned over where she had been moments before. Sure that her heart was beating out of her chest, she started crawling through the stone tunnel. Her hands and knees scraped along the rough sides, which hurt a lot. She almost didn't feel the cold anymore. Almost.

011 spent an eternity in the cold, cramped, hard tunnel. She was exhausted from her work in the Bad Place on top of that, and the anxious feeling that filled her on her run from the lab had long since faded. She couldn't even see where she was crawling. She fell out of the tunnel and onto brittle grass, blinking up at little dots in the sky. Tears leaked out of her eyes and down the sides of her face and into

her buzzed hair. She wanted to stay there forever, on the soft ground, staring up at the little dots that somehow made her feel... not anxious. She didn't recognize the feeling.

No. She had to keep moving, otherwise the Bad Men would find her and take her back to Papa, who would punish her. With as much will as she could muster, she staggered to her feet. She blindly stumbled through trees, branches whipping against her exposed skin. She didn't know how long she had walked or how far. She didn't stop until she stood in front of a building with its lights off. It was as different from the Bad Place as anything could be. It was small and made of peeling white wood, and it looked... happy. Safe. She half ran to the building, stopping in front of a set of stairs. They had a small little alcove beneath them. 011 crawled underneath it, and the next thing she knew was that awful black of the Void.

A/N: Thank you to those who have already reviewed this. Reading your comments literally make my day, so I'll try to keep to a regular weekly update schedule (fingers crossed!). I'm excited to explore these characters in this, so expect some "major" changes coming your way. Thanks again, guys!

~altoinkblots